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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ABIDJAN 000863

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STATE FOR AF/W-EPLUMB AND INR/AA-BGRAVES, LONDON AND PARIS
FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IV](#)

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: VISIT OF STAFFDELS SMITH AND CLACK

REF: A. ABIDJAN 829. ABIDJAN 830

[1](#)B. STATE 108726

[1](#)C. STATE 108828

Classified By: CHARGE VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Shannon Smith, Majority Professional Staff Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Mark Clack, Foreign Relations Staff Member for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited Cote d'Ivoire August 10-15. Smith and Clack conducted a review of programs under the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR), which will be reported separately. They also met with the American Chamber of Commerce, the Ivorian Export Promotion Association, NGOs, and UN officials to discuss the peace process. American Chamber of Commerce Chairman Deborah Gray told Smith and Clack that the Ivorian business community is uneasy due to the delay in elections. Ivorian Export Promotion Association Development Director Gerard Amangoua stressed the importance to Cote d'Ivoire of African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) recertification. World Bank conflict specialist Karene Melloul said Cote d'Ivoire is expected to pay back its arrears to the World Bank by January [1](#)2008. She noted that once the arrears are paid, the World Bank will unfreeze a project and commence new ones. She also informed Smith and Clack that the World Bank Board has approved a USD 120 million grant for post-conflict assistance. Acting Chief of United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire's (UNOCI) Electoral Division Issaka Souna said his office provides technical assistance to the Ivorian government agencies organizing the elections, but does not make any decisions about the elections. Souna stated that President Gbagbo's August 6 call for elections by December 2007 was a political declaration to demonstrate his commitment to holding elections and that it is reasonable to say that elections are not possible by that date. Acting Head of UNOCI's Political Division Edith Oyulu told Smith and Clack that the unarmed political opposition has been critical of UNOCI because of the elimination by the UN Security Council of the Office of High Representative for Elections since the opposition believes that office would ensure the credibility of the electoral process. Oyulu informed Smith and Clack that the Rassemblement des Houphouetistes pour la Democratie et la Paix (RHDP) met with Prime Minister Soro August 14 to express their opposition to rushed elections.

United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) head Kazimiro Rudolf-Jacondo said there are about 70,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and that OCHA is providing assistance to those who have and who want to return to their home communities. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Acting Representative Paul Bassikila said UNICEF is working in the areas of health, education, and water/sanitation. End Summary.

12. (U) Shannon Smith, Majority Professional Staff Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Mark Clack, Foreign Relations Staff Member for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited Cote d'Ivoire August 10-15. Smith and Clack conducted a review of programs under the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR), which will be reported septel. Smith and Clack, accompanied by Poloffs, met with the Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce, the Ivorian Export Promotion Association, NGOs working on human rights, the Acting Heads of UNOCI's Electoral and Political Divisions, a World Bank conflict specialist, the UNICEF Acting Representative, and the head of OCHA.

Economic Situation -----

13. (U) American Chamber of Commerce Chairman Deborah Gray told Smith and Clack August 14 that the American Chamber of Commerce was restarted in Cote d'Ivoire in 2004. Gray said its goal is to provide training and expertise to Ivorian businessmen and noted that there were 7 U.S. trade missions to Cote d'Ivoire in the last 2 years. Gray told Clack that the Chamber of Commerce does not receive many requests for

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assistance to have Cote d'Ivoire declared eligible for AGOA. Gray noted that the Chamber of Commerce does receive many requests about establishing direct ties with U.S. businesses from wealthy Ivorians who are returning to Cote d'Ivoire from overseas and want to start businesses. Gray said that, while she would not encourage investment in Cote d'Ivoire until elections are held, Cote d'Ivoire offers many opportunities for investors and that the country's workers are well educated. Gray said the country's business community is uneasy due to the delay in elections.

14. (U) Gerard Armangoua, Director of Development for the Ivorian Export Promotion Association stressed to Clack August 14 the importance of AGOA recertification to the Ivorian private sector. Armangoua noted that since Senegal, Ghana, and other countries in the region have access to the U.S. market through AGOA, Ivorian business is falling behind the curve. Armangoua also stated that the private sector has been unfairly penalized by Section 508 sanctions and the lack of a USAID presence in the country.

15. (C) Karene Melloul, conflict specialist at the World Bank, stated August 15 that Cote d'Ivoire is one of the most indebted nations in the world and is expected to have paid back its arrears to the World Bank by January 2008. According to Melloul, once Cote d'Ivoire has paid its arrears, a USD 100 million project will be unfrozen, there will be USD 140 million for budget support, as well as USD 65 million for new projects that will focus on governance and HIV/AIDS. Melloul told Smith and Clack that the World Bank Board has approved a USD 120 million grant for post-conflict assistance to Cote d'Ivoire. She informed Smith and Clack that, of the 120 million, 20 million will be used for the identification process, 40 million for reintegration of youth at risk and youth associated with conflict, 40 million for community-driven development at the village level, and 20 million, that has in part not yet been allocated, will be used to help the government with project management assistance.

Elections

16. (C) Acting Chief of UNOCI's Electoral Division Issaka Souna told Smith and Clack August 14 that UNOCI's Electoral Division provides technical assistance to the Ivorian government agencies organizing the national elections, but does not make any decisions about the elections. Souna stated that UNOCI will provide security for the persons involved in the elections as well as for the electoral material and will make its air and land assets available to the Ivorian Government to transport the electoral material. Souna underscored, however, that the Government of Cote d'Ivoire has primary responsibility for maintaining order during the elections. Souna added that UNOCI will organize international observers for the elections. According to Souna, UNOCI works with Cote d'Ivoire's Independent Electoral Commission providing information about Ivorian electoral law as well as international standards and UN conventions regarding elections and providing assistance on creation of a budget. Souna said President Gbagbo's August 6 call for elections by December 2007 was a political declaration to show the President's commitment to elections, but that it is reasonable to say that elections are not possible by December 2007. Souna told Smith and Clack that the Ivorian elections are complicated because identification of voters is the basic issue. He noted that several steps are needed to arrive at voter identification, including issuance of substitute birth certificates ("audiences foraines"), electoral registration, issuance of voter cards, and issuance of national identity cards.

Peace Process

17. (SBU) Avo Bile, Vice President of the Ivorian League of Human Rights, told Smith and Clack August 12 that the Ivorian political process is ignoring civil society as it implements the peace process. Genevieve Sissoko-Diallo, Chairman of NGO

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Women's Legal Experts, said fighting corruption is critical. Malan Ehounou, a magistrate and Chairman of NGO Transparency Justice, complained about the weakness of Cote d'Ivoire's judicial branch.

18. (C) Acting Head of UNOCI's Political Division Edith Oyulu told Smith and Clack August 15 that the unarmed political opposition has been critical of UNOCI because the UN Security Council eliminated the Office of High Representative for Elections, which the opposition believes is called for in the Pretoria peace agreement. Oyulu said the opposition believes retaining the office of High Representative for Elections is the only way to ensure that the electoral process is credible. UNOCI Political Officer Simon Handy said UNOCI is stressing to the political opposition that the UN will have responsibility for certifying the elections in Cote d'Ivoire. Oyulu said the RHDP, an umbrella organization of unarmed opposition parties, met August 14 with Prime Minister Soro and told him that they do not support rushed election; during the meeting, the Prime Minister said he would not insist on any particular date for holding elections. According to Oyulu, the RHDP also complained to the Prime Minister that the government media is giving excessive prominence to the government (the Presidency). Oyulu said UNOCI is concerned that the opposition may pull out of the electoral process. Handy said the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) demonstrates incredible will by the parties to move the peace process forward, but added that the opposition feels sidelined by the agreement. Handy stated that the commitment by the parties to OPA to move the peace process forward still exists and that this will help them overcome the difficulties they will encounter. Handy recognized that implementation of the OPA to date has consisted solely of symbolic gestures and that the key issues, the electoral process; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; and demobilization of the

militia, now need to be addressed. Oyulu said that the benchmarks that have to be met if there is to be meaningful progress towards a lasting peace are identification, establishment of the administration in the northern part of the country, and signature by the President of a decree appointing vice Prefects since they are crucial to carrying out the identification process. Handy informed Smith and Clack that the Independent Electoral Commission gave the opposition political parties the 2000 voter register about 2 weeks ago and asked that they submit any comments within 3 weeks. Handy admitted that the 2000 voter register is fundamentally flawed and noted that the opposition political parties have complained that they cannot be sure that the electronic version they received is in conformity with the original.

¶9. (C) World Bank conflict specialist Karene Melloul told Smith and Clack that there is a 50 percent chance that conflict will resume in Cote d'Ivoire because the major factors for the conflict are not addressed by the OPA. She noted that the June 29 attempt on the life of the Prime Minister indicates that some people are displeased enough with the OPA to go to such lengths to sabotage it. She noted that land tenure is a potentially explosive issue in the country.

Humanitarian Situation

¶10. (SBU) OCHA head Kazimiro Rudolf-Jacondo told Smith and Clack August 15 that only limited funding is available for humanitarian activities in Cote d'Ivoire, possibly because of a perception by the international community that the government of Cote d'Ivoire is economically strong enough to provide social services to its citizens. Rudolf-Jacondo said more and more of the estimated 70,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have begun to return to their home communities and OCHA is supporting those who have gone back and those who want to return. Acting UNICEF Representative Paul Bassikila told Smith and Clack August 15 that UNICEF, which had an office in Cote d'Ivoire before the conflict, is working in the areas of health, education, and water/sanitation. He said UNICEF has a program to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS, supports primary health care, has

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repaired water pumps, has rehabilitated schools, and has provided education kits for students and volunteer teachers in the north since many teachers left the north when the conflict began. Bassikila said it is important for the humanitarian response in Cote d'Ivoire to be followed by development assistance.

¶11. (U) Ms. Smith and Mr. Clack did not/not clear this cable before their departure from Cote d'Ivoire.

HUDDLESTON